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Welcome to the first St Giles' News of 2022! The Communications Committee has returned from the festive season refreshed, revived and full of news. The Neighbourhood Group have given an update on their wonderful fundraising efforts over Christmas, and our guest article is provided by one of the beneficiaries, the Edinburgh Clothing Store. Stephen Preston of the Heritage & Culture team gives a personal perspective on the Cathedral's life outside of worship; and on the subject of worship, the Session Clerk has provided us with an overview of the current Consultation within Edinburgh Presbytery. The St Giles' 900 project has a new venture, the Master of the Music has been keeping his Friends busy, and our guest photographer has captured the building from an unusual and striking angle.

So we can only ask you to – in the words of the War Office to Elsie Inglis – Sit Still and read on!



Reflection from the Associate Minister



Hello, everyone!

The weeks following Christmas always feels like an anti-climax: dull and dark, the sparkle of the celebrations is definitely gone. It seems there is nothing to look forward to in the near future. Add to that the pressure from the many items in the media that we should make up for the indulgences of Christmas and detox, get fit, have a dry January, or a vegan one, which isn't something everyone finds exciting and invigorating – it almost seems as if wider society is determined to start the season of Lent early.

Lent, of course, is when Christians have traditionally fasted, using the weeks between Ash Wednesday and Easter to accompany Jesus on his path from his time in the wilderness towards those last days in Jerusalem, and to reflect on some important themes in the life of Christ. As noted earlier, fasting has become fashionable again in our world, both as a way towards healthier bodies and as a means towards spiritual awareness. In the Christian tradition too there has been a renewed interest in exploring the meaning and benefits of fasting. There are plenty of books out there which lend themselves to personal or group study on Lenten themes, and many organisations, like 'Churches Together in Britain and Ireland' and 'Sanctuary First', provide material online for our use.

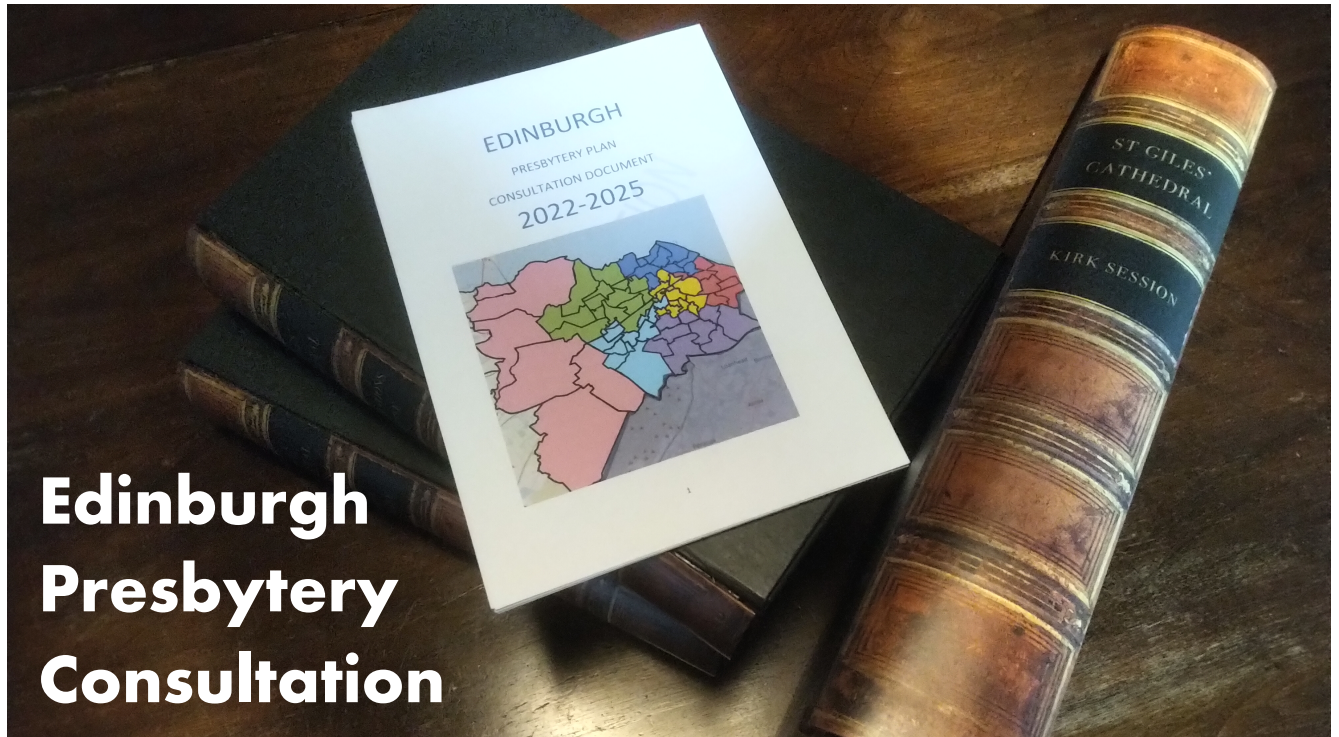
The whole concept of fasting is being thought about in new and different ways by many people in our churches. No longer is this just about giving up alcohol during the six weeks leading up to Easter, but many people use Lent as a time to reflect on their priorities in life in a wider context. For example, EcoCongregation Scotland have cooperated with other organisations to encourage us to look at our use of our resources and our relationship with God's creation. They have practical suggestions like: could we give up plastic for Lent? Could we try buying more local produce?

All of these ideas are attempts at using the season of Lent creatively in order to reflect on the journey that Jesus was on, to go deeper in our understanding what a life of faith in Jesus Christ might look like, and to recognise that this involves letting go of some of the unhelpful, possibly harmful, ways in which we live, harmful to ourselves, to those around us, and to our environment.

There will always be a need for discipline in our Christian living in order to overcome our laziness and our resistance to stretching beyond the comfortable, a need to practise listening to God's word for us with our whole being. This obviously doesn't have to wait till Lent starts at the beginning of March, but sometimes it helps to have something in our calendar which gives us that nudge to attend to our spiritual needs.

With many blessings for you all,

Sigrid



Edinburgh Presbytery Consultation

Presbytery has for some time been deliberating about how to respond to the General Assembly's agenda to reduce the number of churches and Ministers in the light of falling congregations and financial stringency. In an effort to progress this daunting task, a consultation document has been prepared and was circulated in December, which contains recommendations on ways in which the necessary savings may be achieved.

The Consultation document runs to more than 100 pages, and discusses ways in which congregations can be more effectively resourced, in terms of both Ministers and buildings. It assesses those resources in seven 'clusters' – of which St Giles' is included in the Central Cluster – and then by combinations of parishes.

In the Consultation, St Giles' has been linked directly with Canongate: the proposal is for a union between the two, but one where both Ministers and both churches will be retained. There are several suggestions which are made as to how the two congregations may pool resources, including the sharing by each of the Parish Ministers of the two churches the delivery of worship at the other. While the Minister of Canongate may be tasked with delivering a city-

wide Ministry to the Parliament, Council and Armed Forces communities, the Minister and Associate of St Giles' would share in the delivery of mission, worship and pastoral care at Canongate.

In reviewing the proposals, the Kirk Session of St Giles' has made some initial comments and observations. In particular, it is worth noting that the idea of "releasing" the building to Historic Environment Scotland (a comment which made headline news in some newspapers) is no more than a speculative suggestion, around which no discussions have taken place.

The task now is for us to discuss the proposals, and explore ways in which we may be able to build on the opportunities they create. With the expressed intention of having a plan in place no later than December 2022, time is not on our side – a draft plan is sought by June, in order to allow time for details to be ironed out and final Presbytery approval obtained. However, it is hoped that if we approach this challenge in a spirit of friendly, imaginative and creative collaboration, we may see a positive outcome that is of benefit to all.

Mark Batho, Session Clerk



Dear St Giles'...

As part of the preparation and celebration of 900 years of St Giles' Cathedral the St Giles' 900 Committee is keen to gather stories from our members, volunteers and visitors from all around the world. Please read and share this letter and consider sending us your story.

In 2024, St Giles' Cathedral will celebrate its 900th anniversary. With around 1 million people visiting St Giles' in 2019, the year before the COVID pandemic, there must be millions of people for whom St Giles' Cathedral, through the building, the music, the worship, the welcome, has touched them in a significant and meaningful way.

We would love you to share your stories with us as part of the anniversary celebrations and encourage others to take part too.

You are maybe a member of the congregation with family roots in St Giles' and the building, liturgy, music and rhythm and pattern of worship are embedded in your being and psyche. Share with us what this means in your life today and how it impacts on the life you live and the decisions you make.

You maybe come to St Giles' occasionally, not necessarily as someone who would say they are on a 'faith journey' but something about the building and community make you feel welcome and encouraged to return. Our Minister reminds us every week that whether you are a regular worshipper, occasional visitor, or here for the first time you are very welcome.

Maybe you come to St Giles' regularly as part of the civic community. What does this mean for you? What role do you feel St Giles' plays as part of life in the city and nation? What does your contact with St Giles' mean in your life?

Maybe you popped into St Giles' and something touched you – you heard something surprising from one of the guides, you met someone you

have not seen for a long time, you had an insight into your faith or your life? Do share your story with us.

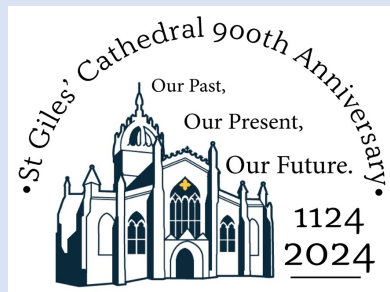
Maybe you, your children or grandchildren were christened in St Giles', perhaps you were married here, perhaps a friend or a loved one had their funeral service here. As we celebrate Christ's life throughout the year in worship, St Giles' reflects all aspects of our own lives – the joys and the sorrows and we are interested in hearing about them.

Please share your Dear St Giles' story. We will keep the stories anonymous, using only your first name, but it would be helpful to have your full name and contact details. We plan to use these stories in various ways during the celebrations.

Please consider writing a letter or note to St Giles'. You can do this by sending an email to comms@stgilescathedral.org.uk or sending in a letter to Dear St Giles', The Minister's Office, St Giles' Cathedral, High Street, Edinburgh, EH1 1RE, or put it in an envelope addressed Dear St Giles' and give it to a staff member or steward.

We look forward to receiving your stories.

The St Giles' 900 Committee





St. Andrewside Ceremonial

On Sunday 5th December 2021, St Giles' marked St Andrewside. The Knights of the Order of the Thistle attended the 11am service, and the Choir's anthem for the occasion was the first Scottish performance of an anthem by Sir James MacMillan, 'Except the Lord build the house'. This had been commissioned in memory of Sir Eric Anderson KT who died in April 2020, setting text from Psalm 127 which is also the motto of the City of Edinburgh.

At the beginning of the service, the Knights' procession halted briefly to view the bronze plaque in the Preston Aisle which marks the service of the Very Rev Gilleasbuig Macmillan, KCVO, FRSE, Minister of St Giles' for over 40 years until his retirement in 2013 and former Dean of the Order of the Thistle. The likeness was executed by Sir Alexander Stoddart, the Queen's sculptor in Scotland. The Minister welcomed Gilleasbuig Macmillan and his family to the service and dedicated the plaque with the following words:



"Today we give thanks for the ministry of Gilleasbuig Macmillan, for his stewardship and renewal of this holy space; for his pastoral care and power of preaching; for his service to city, nation, Order of the Thistle and to his monarch. In the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the glory of God, I dedicate this plaque to honour the ministry of your servant, Gilleasbuig, in the name of God, Creator, Redeemer and Comforter."

Poor of the Parish Fund allocations

Few people will have heard of the 'Poor of the Parish Fund' outside the Kirk Session. The Dickensian named 'Poor of the Parish Fund' (PPF) came into being in earlier times when there was poverty in the parish and the church set up financial provisions to help those in need. Nowadays the income from this restricted fund which is still held by the Cathedral is used to support good causes in our local community.

On an annual basis the Kirk Session agrees how much income from the PPF is available for distribution to local charities and asks the Neighbourhood Group for its recommendations. This year the Kirk Session agreed to distribute £10,000. On recommendation from the Neighbourhood Group this has been split equally amongst the following charities, giving each one £1250: 6vt (City Youth Cafe), Bethany Christian Trust, Cunningham House, Edinburgh Clothing Store, FreshStart, Grassmarket Community Project, Streetwork and The Welcoming. The money was distributed in December 2021. St Giles' currently supports all of these charities and all are very active within our local area.

We hope to be able to bring you a series of articles on the work of each of these charities starting in this issue and continuing in forthcoming newsletters.



Scott Charity Nos SCO39409

The Edinburgh Clothing Store

Over many years members of St Giles' Cathedral have supported the work of the Edinburgh Clothing Store both by giving generous financial donations and by giving donations of clothing, bedding and towels. This is very much appreciated and makes a huge difference to the service we offer to the most needy in our community.

Demand for the services of the Edinburgh Clothing Store is always affected by national events but since March 2020, international events have had a major influence in how and whom we serve. The pandemic with the government imposed lockdowns and the fall of Afghanistan have certainly had an impact.

In order to reopen after the first lockdown, and protect both clients and helpers, we had to re-organise fundamentally how we worked. Reluctantly we considered that so long as restrictions were in place we could no longer see clients face to face.

To achieve a safe system of socially distanced working, we had to install a remote entry system, and set up a system using iPads. On receiving a referral from a caring agency, we phone the clients at a pre-arranged time to find out what they need, their style and colour preferences and most importantly their true sizes! A time is then arranged for them to collect the bags containing their choice of clothes, bedding and towels. This seems to be working well although we hope to return to seeing the clients as soon as it is considered safe to do so.

In September, at short notice, we opened extra days to provide essential clothing for 59 Afghan refugees who had been brought to temporary

accommodation in an Edinburgh hotel. Most had been left with only the clothes they were wearing when they fled and needed everything. It was a difficult operation as the "families" were not necessarily Mum, Dad and children but more often included the more extended family of nieces and nephews and/or grandchildren who didn't necessarily have the same surnames. Interestingly but perhaps understandably there were more girls than boys in the extended family groups.

Two weeks later we were asked to clothe a further 16 refugees who had been brought to Edinburgh for their safety after demonstrations were held against them in another part of the UK. Again, we were able to help promptly by further extra days open. I would like to pay tribute to the Clothing Store volunteers who very willingly rose to meet this challenge while still continuing to offer the service to local people in need.

With rising energy prices and inflation rising it is likely that our services will be required even more in 2022.

The Clothing Store is run entirely by Volunteers and receives no government or council funding. This means that the support given by St Giles' is invaluable. Without your wonderful support it would not be possible to offer as much as we do. Therefore, as ever, a huge "thank you" to all, who by giving clothes and/or money help those who are in the most desperate need.

More information can be found on the website: <http://www.edinburghclothingstore.org>

Fiona Stimpson



Musical friends

Many of you will be very aware of the work which The Friends of the Music of St Giles' Cathedral does to support the musical life of St Giles', and this has never been more important than through the period of the pandemic.

The Friends was founded in 2007 in order to ensure that the rich musical heritage we have could continue to flourish and expand. Since then a number of recordings have been funded, and a tradition of commissioning new music for the Cathedral Choir has been established; the current St Giles' 900 Choirbook project is the latest and most ambitious project yet in that regard. This brings together choral compositions from five leading Scottish composers and its completion in 2024 will coincide with the 900th anniversary of St Giles'; on completion it will have created a fabulous body of new sacred choral music not only for St Giles' but for all involved in choral music in worship. Details of how you can support the Choirbook project can be found at <https://stgilescathedral.org.uk/st-giles-900-choirbook/> and in leaflets available in St Giles'.

Whilst the Choirbook is a major project, The Friends also support the music in many other ways; over the past year for instance they have enabled the purchase of HD cameras for the organ console so that audiences for our organ concerts can see the performer via TV relay – this has proved extremely popular. In helping St Giles' to adjust to the demands of music making in the pandemic The Friends have also purchased a number of durable music stands for the choir, allowing singers, who are required to be distanced from each other, to have somewhere for all their music when they cannot sing in the choir stalls.

If you have not yet joined The Friends, and would like to do so to enable this very important support to continue, then a membership leaflet and form is available at <https://stgilescathedral.org.uk/friends-of-the-music/> and in St Giles'.

Michael Harris, Organist and Master of the Music

You Kept Knitting

A big thank you from the Neighbourhood Group to all members of the congregation, friends and neighbours who helped us with our challenge to knit blankets for Syrian refugees in Lebanese refugee camps. Several hundred squares were donated to our appeal as well as a few fully-completed blankets. Some of these blankets were delivered direct to Edinburgh Direct Aid. The rest are currently being sewn together by a number of willing volunteers and will be delivered shortly. You can see an example of one of our colourful completed blankets in the photo. We know of at least six other blankets which you have kindly made. Our appeal is now finished.





Hello from Heritage and Culture

A profile with Stephen Preston

This being the first edition of the St Giles' newsletter for 2022, it seemed appropriate to mix a profile of H&C and a rundown of some things to expect this year.



I've been at St Giles' for seven and a half years. I came to St Giles' fresh out of university, having studied Economic History at the University of Edinburgh. I'd originally planned to stay for a year or two after which I planned to go into consultancy - that having been what I'd spent summer internships doing. But once I'd been bitten by the St Giles' bug with its contagious history (readers will forgive the ill-timed analogy) I was trapped. During my time here we've tried to improve, expand, and diversify our offer. In 2019 St Giles' played host to The Museum of the Moon - a scale replica of the moon - our first of the new Burns and Beyond January series. The Choir's William Taylor fantastically demonstrated, with the aid of a Lego Saturn V rocket, the Apollo 11 mission. Swiftly following this was the Chinese lantern display in 2020. This

January should have seen *Les Colombes* - an installation of doves folded by visitors and hung from the ceiling. Unfortunately owing to Covid, we've had to delay this until March. After-hours events are a fantastic addition, but our bread and butter remains as it was when I started: visitors. Readers may have noticed the emergence of a St Giles' 'style' which we are adopting across the Cathedral. In conjunction with a clearer style, the one-way system-necessitated by the pandemic- demonstrated that visitors appreciate a more structured visit. Our aim is to twin the style and structure to provide a more cohesive, valuable, and curated visit.

Improving the visit for some must come alongside improving it for all. That's why 2022 will also see St Giles' improve upon its good foundation in terms of accessibility. I am currently working with The Scottish Braille Press to produce braille information whilst Ciara in H&C works on an audio tour. Please do get in touch if you have any further ideas.

Finally, we're improving the programme of 'things' going on in the Cathedral. In August we welcomed Thulani Rachia's *obuyile* as part of the Edinburgh Art Festival. Our own Hazel Frost started our *Maker's Workshop* series in September where she demonstrated throwing clay. The *Crime and Punishment* exhibition in November gave a glimpse into the crimes of common people during the Covenanting era. Looking to the future, for the whole of Lent we'll have Jane Couroussopolis' *Stations of the Cross*. Watch this space for our other events throughout the year.

As always, if you want to find out more about what Heritage and Culture do, drop us a line. Sarah's details are on the back page - my email is Stephen.preston@stgilescathedral.org.uk. Once we're finally done with Covid, do feel free to arrange to see us in person as well.



Latest Covid measures, and damage limitation

John Andrew, General Committee Convenor

As you are reading this you will be aware that the incidence of the Covid-19 virus and the Omicron variant has continued to reduce in frequency, and it is hoped that the worst of the pandemic is now behind us. You will also be aware that the First Minister and Scottish Government advisers have now announced additional reductions in the measures to control the outbreak. After nearly two years of restrictions on our way of life it is welcomed that we are now able to sense some return to normality. We must however provide a safe and secure environment for all that worship and visit St Giles' and I am sure that in taking a cautious approach we will ensure that everyone can participate with confidence.

We continue to be advised by the Church of Scotland Covid Group, in particular the Principal Clerk and the Presbytery, on the legal and operational requirements to be followed. This is being regularly reviewed but as we seek to maintain an appropriate, safe system for all who worship and visit St Giles', some existing measures will continue. The wearing of face coverings whilst in the Cathedral is still mandatory and the regular use of hand sanitiser is recommended. The one-way system and distanced seating in the Cathedral will also continue as will the use of the contactless points and plates for the offering. We will continue to

operate the Test and Protect registration system in the short term and bookings through EventBrite are encouraged, though we hope that the requirement for booking to attend services may be removed soon and more normal seating provided. Communion will continue to be celebrated by the presiding minister, with the congregation taking bread from the baskets provided; the taking of wine from the common cup will await further guidance. The Choir numbers can increase as the requirement for 2m distancing for singing has been reduced to 1m from early February.

We are undertaking a review of future renewal and maintenance works required in the Cathedral and I will provide further information in future newsletters.

One disappointing item of news was some recent damage to the Montrose Memorial located in the Chepman Aisle. This act of vandalism was not the first to occur to the memorial and repairs will be undertaken in the coming weeks. The Chepman Aisle has been closed to visitors as a result and a longer-term solution to protect the memorial will be investigated. We are not immune to such incidents; these are rare, but it is a reminder that we must remain vigilant, and the work our staff and volunteers do ensures that we offer a safe and secure experience.

Christmas Can Collection

Prior to Christmas the Neighbourhood Group undertook a can collection in aid of the Rock Trust. With help from the congregation, ministry team and volunteers from the Rock Trust around £1100 was collected over two days. This was supplemented by some very generous donations from the congregation, choir and friends bringing the total to £3532.50. The Rock Trust and the Neighbourhood Group wish to thank all those who took part.



Stay Silent sit still for Dr Elsie Inglis

Sheana Ashton introduces a new fundraising project

“Dear Lady Go home and sit still!” Those were the contemptuously dismissive words of a War Office Colonel Blimp to Dr Elsie Inglis when, in the autumn of 1914, she offered her services as physician, surgeon and administrator to help the war effort. One wonders how the same pompous gentleman reacted when, in defiance, she raised funds to set up the Scottish Women’s Hospitals for Foreign Service, recruited female staff for it and, in November 1914, sent the first unit to France.

Elsie Inglis is a Scottish heroine, a dauntless example of those women who challenged the academic, professional and social prejudices of her day to qualify in medicine, setting up and administering hospital care, especially for women and children.

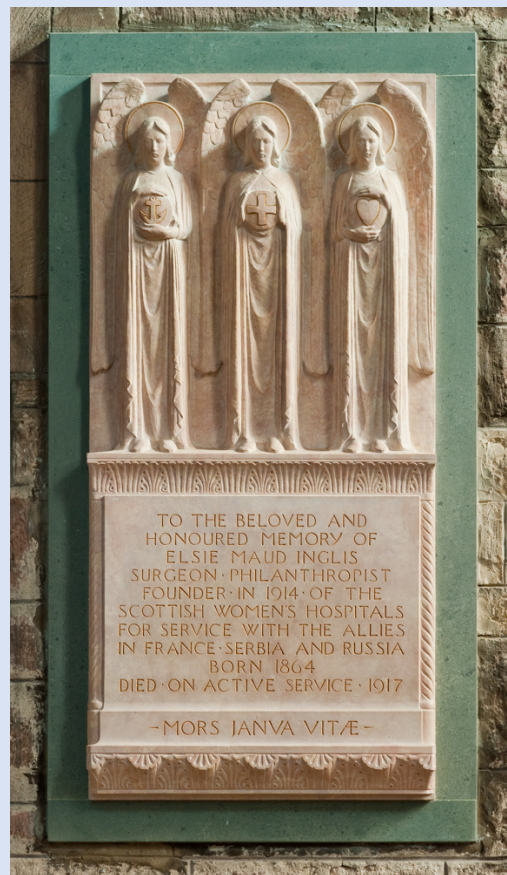
She seemed to know no fear. Aged 50 in 1914, she not only sent the hospital, staffed entirely by women, to France, but sent a second one to Serbia in January 1915, later joining it as its chief medical officer. When Serbia was invaded and the invaders took over the hospital, she was interned and eventually repatriated. Undeterred, she continued to raise funds for the Serbian hospital unit, now operating in Russia, where she rejoined and continued to serve, although aware that she had terminal cancer. Defiant and brave, she stayed with the Serbian unit until, in November 1917, it was transferred out of Russia. “Everything satisfactory and all well except me,” she telegraphed home. She died the day after the unit disembarked at Newcastle.

A member of St Giles', her memorial, designed by Frank Mears, is in the Holy Cross Aisle. In truth, Scotland has perhaps awarded her less recognition than she deserves, as indeed has been the case with many other women. It has

been observed that, in Edinburgh, there are more statues to animals than to women. Here, in Elsie Inglis, is surely one woman who, for her selfless and fearless service, deserves a statue.

Accordingly, the Lord Provost, with the Girl Guides, is spearheading a fund-raising campaign with Sit Still events throughout March for a statue of Elsie Inglis to be erected in the High Street, located near the site of her first hospital.

As part of this campaign, join us between 10.30 am and 3.30 pm on Tuesday 8th and Wednesday 9th March to “Sit Still and stay silent” as a fund-raising event. The Holy Cross Aisle, with its memorial to Elsie Inglis and to Scottish Nurses killed in war, seems an appropriate place. Join us in 15 minute slots to sit still and stay silent, donating to the fund.



Elsie Inglis website: www.elsieinglis.org

Email address: elaine@onecitytrust.com

Donations website: <https://onecitytrust.com/dr-elsie-inglis-fundraising-campaign>



© Colin Scott

This dramatic perspective on St Giles' was captured by Dr Colin Scott, who now lives in the north of England but is no stranger to St Giles'. His father Sandy was an elder for many years, and Colin has fond memories of attending Sunday School on George IV Bridge before being shepherded along to the Cathedral to listen to the end of the service.



And Finally...

We hope you have enjoyed reading this edition of the newsletter. If there is anything you would like to see included in future editions, please get in touch on comms@stgilescathedral.org.uk

Many of you will be aware that, in addition to this bi-monthly Newsletter, we are now also sending out a weekly email. This is intended to provide timely information of current events, as well as passing on occasional bulletins on the subject of road closures, parking restrictions etc. which sometimes impact Sunday morning routine.

If you are not already on the distribution list for this email, and would like to be, please let us know – also on the comms email address listed above.

Contact information

The [@stgilescathedral.org.uk](mailto:comms@stgilescathedral.org.uk) address has been rolled out to certain of the key contacts at St Giles' – some examples are shown below:

- The Minister minister@stgilescathedral.org.uk
- Sigrid Marten, Associate Minister sigrid.marten@stgilescathedral.org.uk
- Michael Harris, Master of the Music michael.harris@stgilescathedral.org.uk
- Mark Batho, Session Clerk sessionclerk@stgilescathedral.org.uk
- Niall Lothian, Treasurer treasurer@stgilescathedral.org.uk
- Sarah Phemister, Head of Heritage & Culture sarah.phemister@stgilescathedral.org.uk

As Communications Convenor, Amanda Forsyth monitors the comms@stgilescathedral.org.uk address, and is generally able to forward queries to other members of the Kirk staff and Session.

Useful contacts:

- The Minister's Secretary 0131 225 4363
- Beadles' Office 0131 226 0672
- Cathedral Shop 0131 226 0673 shop@stgilescathedral.org.uk
- Finance Office 0131 225 8683
- Heritage & Culture 0131 226 0674

Picture credits

As ever, we wish to thank Peter Backhouse, who has provided his photographic skills for a number of the images in the Newsletter. We would also like to thank Ivar Struthers, who has kindly allowed us to use his image of St. Giles' at sunset on the front cover.